



LIFELINK

NEWSLETTER

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Supporting your Shipmate During the Wait for PCS Orders

Like any transition, permanent change of station (PCS) moves can be exciting, frustrating and stressful all at once. Recently, Navy announced that Sailors and their families can continue to expect **shortened lead times** for PCS moves through the end of the fiscal year: approximately two months or less. This unpredictability can make the transition more challenging than usual, which is why it's more important than ever to be there for your shipmates. Here's what you can do:

During the "waiting period:"

The stress of not knowing can start to spill over into other areas of your shipmate's life and lead them to feel overwhelmed or powerless. Small acts can help your shipmate regain **predictability** and **controllability** even while awaiting the firm details. Offer to help them get a head start on the things that they can tackle now, such as packing out of season clothing or taking inventory of rented household goods to expedite the return process. Even while waiting on official orders it's a good idea to suggest that your shipmate reach out to their new command to connect with their sponsor as soon as possible. If their sponsor hasn't yet been identified, offer to link your buddy with someone who's navigated a short-notice move before and can share some helpful hints. Emotions can run high during any move and at times your shipmate may feel as if they're the only one who's going through this stress. Connecting with and learning from others who have been there can make the reality seem less daunting, along with practicing a few strategies to **think positively**.

Once orders are in-hand:

Ask what you can do, whether it's packing or lending an ear. If your shipmate seems to have it all under control, it's still important to pay attention to even the smallest signs of distress. Perhaps you're already aware of relationship and/or family issues, financial strain, uncertainty about the new job or other things going on in his or her life. These situations can intensify when facing major changes and may worsen if left unchecked. Encourage your shipmate to speak with someone who can help them work through things, such as a chaplain, leader or **BeThere Peer Support** counselor. Getting support early is vital to ensuring that stressors don't turn into crises, especially when starting a new chapter in life.

During the move:

Stay connected so that your shipmate doesn't lose the protection that a sense of community can provide. Be sure to exchange updated contact information, ask about plans (travel dates, pit stops, arrival dates, etc.) and check in often. When you check in with your shipmate, nudge him or her to get **adequate rest** (seven to eight hours, supplementing deficits with brief naps), eat balanced even when on the go (fruits, veggies, lean protein and water), and take breaks to enjoy the journey.

If you notice signs of distress:

Leaving a familiar environment - especially quickly - can disrupt daily routines and social networks, increasing the likelihood of risky decision-making. If you are concerned about your shipmate, **ACT** immediately. You can call the **Military Crisis Line** on behalf of your shipmate to get them connected to **services in their area**. Don't hesitate to reach out to others to help connect the dots, such as your shipmate's receiving command or a family member to help facilitate the intervention process if a potentially serious situation is evolving.

Staying connected not only helps to restore predictability and controllability; it promotes **trust**, strengthens **relationships** and helps your shipmate find **meaning** in challenges. It's about being there for *Every Sailor, Every Day*.



Lifelink Spotlight

Practicing Kindness 1 Small ACT at a Time

Connecting with your community through **small acts of kindness** not only makes a big difference in the lives of others, but also contributes to your own feelings of connectedness and belonging. These are important aspects of social and emotional well-being. Having spent almost two months improving a place whose mission is to help others, Seabees from Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit (CBMU) 202 Detachment Jacksonville have been putting that sentiment into practice.

CBMU-202 Sailors have been volunteering their time, skills and expertise to **Hope Therapy**, a non-profit equine therapy program that works with veterans and children with developmental and learning disabilities. Chief Aviation Structural Mechanic Joanna Madrid, Naval Air Station Jacksonville's command climate specialist, started volunteering at Hope Therapy a year ago, helping to prepare horses for therapy sessions and assisting therapists with clients. Through her weekly volunteering, she learned of some projects the non-profit organization needed to give visitors a self-reflection and relaxation space.

"I really enjoy being out here, learning about the horses and helping out. We muck stalls, groom the horses and assist with therapy sessions. It's so peaceful here and everyone is so caring," said Madrid in a related [Navy.mil](#) story. So, she reached out to Senior Chief Constructionman Michael Blackney of CBMU-202 to see if the Seabees could help. They did that and then some.

"After our initial visit to the ranch, we saw that there could be more done there," Blackney observed. The Seabees put in a walkway, created benches for additional seating and built a fire pit. They also got creative and took initiative, building a pergola and researching the design ideas on their own.

Bravo Zulu CBMU-202. Coming together as a team for a greater cause strengthens unit cohesion, feelings of individual contribution and instills hope in the community.

Tell us how you're making a difference by emailing suicideprevention@navy.mil, subject: Lifelink Spotlight. For more ideas to get involved and stay connected, visit the Navy Community Service Program, [here](#).



Plan of the Week Notes

Below are sample Plan of the Week notes aligning with topics covered by the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign during the month of June:

1. Stress injuries are the result of severe or prolonged exposure to stress. The Orange Zone of the Stress Continuum Model can help identify symptoms and behaviors associated with these injuries, which if left untreated, can lead to psychological health illnesses including posttraumatic stress disorder. To learn about these symptoms and how to promote recovery, visit the NavyNavStress blog at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2016/04/18/stress-awareness-month-know-your-zone>.
2. Did you know that men are 24% less likely than women to have visited a doctor within the past year? Making healthy choices includes consulting health professionals and becoming educated on what preventive measures are most important for your health. Check out Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's latest infographic, "Men's Health: Investing in the Future is not a Game," for men's health tips to promote physical, psychological, emotional and behavioral well-being: <http://go.usa.gov/cSdwx>.
3. Did you know? Risk of stress injury, destructive behavior and suicide can increase during times when Sailors are experiencing significant changes and are away from their shipmates, family and mission for an extended period. This can include permanent change of station (PCS) moves, which peak during summer months. Staying connected with your shipmates can help you detect signs of distress and promote early support. It's about being there for *Every Sailor, Every Day*.
4. Need some deployment resources? Looking for relationship or financial support? Feeling more stressed than normal? The BeThere Peer Support Call and Outreach Center is there to help: Call 1-844-357-PEER (7337) or send a text to 480-360-6188.

Local Support from Military OneSource

Did you know that **Military OneSource** has **state consultants** that operate in all 50 states and Puerto Rico? These consultants offer a range of additional services such as small-group meetings to explore any topic in-depth, to live support for local events like health fairs or community engagements. State consultants also work with military leaders and providers to coordinate local resources. Learn more by calling 1-800-342-9647.

News and Resources

Working With Your Provider:
Does Rank Impact Therapy?
[DCoE](#)

5 Small ACTs to Help You Chill
Out
[NavyNavStress](#)

Guidance for Reducing Access
to Lethal Means through
Voluntary Storage of Privately-
Owned Firearms
[NAVADMIN](#)

Sailors Offer Help and Hope
Through Volunteerism
[Navy.mil](#)

How PTSD Affects Brain
"Circuitry"
[HPRC](#)

Men's Health Month: Making
Smart Choices Every Day, All
Year Long
[DCoE](#)

Maintain Family Strength
When Both Parents Deploy
[Real Warriors](#)

Lavender and Stress Reduction
[HPRC](#)

Sponsorships Offer a Friendly
Face for your Next Move
[Military OneSource](#)

The Science Behind Finding
the Balance Between Combat
Load, Survivability, Health and
Performance
[Navy Medicine Live](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

June Observances
PTSD Awareness Month
Men's Health Month
LGBT Pride Month

Happy 242nd Birthday, US
Army!
June 14

SPC Training Webinars
8 June, 1000
21 June, 1400
[Register here](#)

Understanding the Different Responses to Traumatic Stress

If you've ever directly or indirectly experienced a shocking or life-threatening event—from a car accident to combat exposure—you may recall a few of your body's reactions. Your muscles may have tensed and you may have started breathing rapidly, preparing to protect yourself or escape to avoid harm. Or you may have felt physically unable to move or react; temporarily paralyzed. This reflexive response is known as "**fight, flight or freeze**." It is the brain's pre-programmed way of preparing the body for perceived or actual threats—or temporarily impairing its ability to react to the threat—and is a normal frontline reaction to extreme stress. Once the threat has passed, the body can naturally return to its optimal state, rebalancing functions that were briefly intensified or suppressed.

While the body can self-regulate, some reactions may linger for a short time afterward, such as feeling nervous or overly cautious when a situation reminds you of the traumatic experience. These reactions—which may *temporarily* impair behavior or function—are known as **posttraumatic stress**. In many cases, posttraumatic stress symptoms will subside naturally within a few days or weeks following the traumatic experience. Speaking with a **chaplain**, harnessing the support of friends and family, as well as maintaining a balanced diet and fitness regimen can help ease posttraumatic stress symptoms and promote recovery. Practicing **self-care** can also help build resilience after a traumatic experience. Try **journal writing** as a tool to promote calmness while expressing feelings, worries and concerns. If you have questions about your stress reactions or those of a shipmate or loved one, the **Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) Outreach Center** is a 24/7 non-clinical resource that can connect you with answers and additional support tools.

Anyone can be at risk of developing injuries and illnesses from stress. Reactions vary by individual and are influenced by several factors, from genetics and neurobiology, to available social support and positive coping skills. Some may not encounter extended or interfering symptoms after a traumatic experience. For others, these experiences (or other situations like the sudden loss of a loved one) may lead to development of more lasting and serious psychological health impacts, such as **posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**. PTSD is a clinically-diagnosable stress illness where certain symptoms persist over an extended period of time and severely interfere with daily function. Some of the symptoms of PTSD include:

- Re-living the event through flashbacks and/or nightmares, or reacting to reminders of the event (known as *re-experiencing*);
- Losing interest in previously enjoyable activities and/or avoiding things or people that may be reminders of the event (known as *avoidance*); and
- Becoming easily agitated or constantly feeling on edge (known as *arousal*).

PTSD can feel like a constant state of "fight, flight or freeze" even when there is no actual threat present. While it can only be diagnosed and treated by a behavioral health provider, acknowledging your feelings and talking to someone about your experiences are important first steps toward recovery. If you're not comfortable with reaching out, you can find motivation at www.maketheconnection.net. This resource features candid video testimonials shared by your peers who have sought help for PTSD, as well as customized information to help you understand your symptoms and connect you with convenient services. The **PTSD Coach** mobile app, available for **desktop**, **Apple** and **Android** devices, also provides personalized feedback while suggesting coping skills, sources of support and professional treatment options.



For more info on PTSD, visit www.ptsd.va.gov.